

FCC Consumer Advisory

Closed Captioning for Digital Television (DTV)

Overview

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is concerned that consumers may experience difficulty in receiving and/or viewing closed captioning on some digital television (DTV) programming, including high definition television (HDTV), provided by a programming distributor such as a cable company or a satellite television provider. These difficulties generally could arise from two causes: 1) the consumer's set-top box and/or DTV are not properly set to allow closed captions to be displayed; or 2) there are technical problems with the cable or satellite provider's system that prevent closed captions from being received and decoded by the set-top box and/or DTV.

Background

Closed captioning is an assistive technology that allows persons with hearing disabilities to access television programming. Closed captioning displays the audio portion of programming as text superimposed over the video.

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For a television receiver to display closed captions, it must use a set-top box decoder or contain integrated decoder circuitry.

As of January 1, 2006, all “new” English language programming, defined as analog programming first published or exhibited on or after January 1, 1998, and digital programming first aired on or after July 1, 2002, must be captioned, with some exceptions.

For more information on closed captioning, closed captioning schedules, and exemptions, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/caption.html and see our consumer fact sheet at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html.

What You Can Do

If you have difficulties viewing closed captions on DTV programming, including HDTV, received from your cable company or satellite television provider, you should:

- consult any consumer information and manuals/guides on closed captions for DTV programming provided by your cable or satellite provider;

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- ensure that the captioning function on your set-top box, if applicable, is turned on;
- ensure that the captioning function on your DTV is turned on.

If you are still unable to view closed captions on DTV programming, you should contact your cable company or satellite television provider for assistance. If your provider is unable to help, you can contact the FCC's Consumer Center at the number listed below. You can also file an informal complaint alleging a violation of the Television Decoder Circuitry Act and the FCC's implementing rules. You can file your complaint using our on-line complaint Form 475 found at http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints_general.html; e-mailing dtvinfo@fcc.gov; calling our Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
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Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
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For more information about the digital television transition and HDTV, visit www.dtv.gov and see our fact sheet at http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/digitaltv_largeprint.pdf.

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To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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